

ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
EVALUATION  
AT  
ST JAMES THE GREAT,  
NORTON JUXTA KEMPSEY,  
WORCESTERSHIRE

Alvaro Mora-Ottomano

With a contribution by Derek Hurst

Illustrated by Carolyn Hunt

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Project 2991  
Report 1494  
WSM 35957



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## Archaeological evaluation at St. James the Great, Norton Juxta Kempsey, Worcestershire

**Alvaro Mora-Ottomano**

**With a contribution by Derek Hurst and illustrated by Carolyn Hunt**

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### Background information

<i>Client</i>	Stainburn Taylor Architects
<i>Site address</i>	Church Lane, Norton Juxta Kempsey, Worcestershire
<i>National Grid reference</i>	SO 8776 1185
<i>Sites and Monuments Record reference</i>	WSM 35957
<i>Planning authority</i>	Wychavon District Council
<i>Reference no.</i>	W/06/1669
<i>Brief</i>	HEAS 2006a
<i>Project design</i>	HEAS 2006b
<i>Project parameters</i>	IFA 2001

### *Previous archaeological work on the site*

There has been no previous archaeological work undertaken on site.

### *Previous archaeological work on associated sites*

The site is situated within the churchyard of St. James the Great, Norton Juxta Kempsey, just adjacent to the north wall of the nave at a height of about 43m OD (Fig. 1). The underlying geology consists of Mercian Mudstone (British Geological Survey 1993). Dark brown, slightly stony clay loam or silty clay loam soils with reddish subsoil cover most of the site and its surrounding (Beard *et al.* 1986). This area has dispersed evidence for Romano-British, medieval and post-medieval occupation in the vicinity. Detailed information of all the sites in the surrounding area of excavation is documented in the Sites and Monuments Records of the Worcestershire County Council. Most notably there is a Romano-British settlement with later occupation during the medieval period, which is located at *c.* 150m south of the site (WSM 29945); and a Romano-British enclosure at *c.* 500m north of the church (WSM 05399). Further evidence comes from residual pottery such as the ones found within the nearby Old Vicarage (WSM 15336). The church itself (WSM 07749) has a mainly Norman north wall (Bridges 2005, 169; Pevsner 1992, 227).

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### Aims

The aim of the evaluation was to observe and record archaeological deposits and features during the excavation of six trenches, and to determine their extent, state of preservation, date and type, as far as reasonably possible. In particular the evaluation aimed to identify the presence or absence of human burials and establish the level at which they occur; and to identify remains associated with earlier construction phases of the church.

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### Methods

General specification for fieldwork	CAS 1995
Sources consulted	Worcestershire SMR/HER
Date(s) of fieldwork	30/10/06 – 7/11/06
Dimensions of excavated areas	6 trenches 1m x 1m x 1m
(NB. Depth measurements are all taken from the top of present ground level)	

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## Results

A total of seven trenches were excavated. Although the specification of the project indicates that six trenches would suffice to characterise the site, an additional trench was excavated as Trench 1 found a modern soak-away, and thus it did not provide the information sought. The excavation of the trenches was conducted by hand. The exposed surfaces were sufficiently clean to observe well-differentiated archaeological deposits. Two trenches were located against the north wall of the nave in order to explore the general state of its foundation and associated features. The remaining trenches were distributed across the proposed area for development except for on the eastern side where there are a substantial number of graves. The location of the trenches is illustrated in Figure 2 and further details of their cross-section are shown in Figure 3 and Plates 1-6.

Trench 2 (Section 2, Plate 1) revealed partially an east-west grave (207), which contained some human bones but they are mainly visible in section. A nail was also found and seems to be part of a coffin. These remains were found at an approximately depth of 0.70m below the present ground level.

Trenches 3 and 4 (Sections 3 and 4, Plates 2 and 3 respectively) exposed the original Norman foundation (contexts 304 and 404), which consists of four regular courses of roughly hewn Lias stones bonded with mid brown firm clayey silt; it projects out from the nave wall up to 200mm and reaches a depth of 0.80m below present ground level. Within its construction packing material (context 405), there was a sherd of 12<sup>th</sup> to early 13<sup>th</sup> century in date, which corroborates the period ascribed to the north wall of the church based on architectural grounds. Furthermore, there is a large ditch (contexts 302 and 402), which runs almost adjacent to the wall, and it appears to be the result of dismantling a post-medieval land drain. It is suggested that the drain may have caused some kind of problems, such as leakage deriving from a deteriorated pipe, and subsequently it was taken away and possibly diverted.

Trench 5 (Section 5, Plate 4) exposed skeletal remain (508) at *c.* 0.80m below ground level, which consisted of articulated ribs and thoracic vertebrae of an adult interred in supine position and orientated east-west. Once the burial was identified the excavation ended as no further exposure of the skeleton was required.

Trench 6 (Section 6, Plate 5) appears to be sterile, but such a lack of archaeological deposits may be determined by its proximity to two trees, which appear to be fairly ancient and their roots would have made difficult any excavation of early grave pits.

Trench 7 (Section 7, Plate 6) revealed the corner of an east-west grave pit (706), which has a maximum depth of 0.50m. No skeleton was visible, but this is because the majority of the grave extends beyond the trench; and therefore it is likely that some skeletal remains may still survive.

On completion of excavation and records, all the trenches were reinstated by replacing the excavated soils, and disarticulated human bones were re-buried in their trenches.

### *Statement of confidence*

Access to, and visibility of, deposits allowed a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved.

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**Deposit description**

The deposits recorded during the evaluation are summarised in the following tables:

**Trench 2**      Length: 1m      Width: 1m      Depth: 0.80m

Context	Description	Interpretation	Depth (below ground level)
201	Mid reddish brown soft clay	Made-ground layer	0-0.18m
202	Mid greyish brown soft clayey silt	Topsoil	0.18-0.35m
203	Mid greenish brown firm clayey silt	Subsoil	0.35-0.60m
204	Light reddish brown hard clay	Natural	0.60m+
205	Mid brown hard clayey silt with few pebbles	Backfill of 207	0.35-0.80m
206	Mid reddish brown firm clayey silt	Fill of 207	0.40-0.80m
207	Linear E-W pit, flat base, straight sides	Grave	0.35-0.80m

**Trench 3**      Length: 1m      Width: 1m      Depth: 0.80m

Context	Description	Interpretation	Depth (below ground level)
301	Mixed mid reddish brown firm clay and silt	Fill of 302	0-0.75m
302	E-W linear ditch	Drain	0-0.75m
303	Mid greenish brown soft clayey silt	Layer	0-0.35m
304	4 regular courses of roughly hewn Lias stones bonded with mid brown firm clayey silt	Foundation wall	0.35-0.80m
305	Unworked Lias stones and small cobbles within a brown hard silt matrix	Packing and backfill of foundation trench	0.35-0.80m
306	Linear E-W ditch	Foundation trench	0.35-0.80m
307	Mid greenish brown firm clayey silt	Subsoil	0.50-0.70m
308	Light reddish brown hard clay	Natural	0.70+m

**Trench 4**      Length: 1m      Width: 1m      Depth: 0.80m

Context	Description	Interpretation	Depth (below ground level)
401	Mixed mid reddish brown firm clay and silt	Fill of 302	0-0.75m
402	E-W linear ditch	Drain	0-0.75m
403	Mid greenish brown soft clayey silt	Layer	0-0.35m
404	4 regular courses of roughly hewn Lias stones bonded with mid brown firm clayey silt	Foundation wall	0.35-0.80m
405	Unworked Lias stones and small cobbles within a brown hard silt matrix	Packing and backfill of foundation trench	0.35-0.80m
406	Linear E-W ditch	Foundation trench	0.35-0.80m
407	Mid greenish brown firm clayey silt	Subsoil	0.50-0.70m
408	Light reddish brown hard clay	Natural	0.70+m

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**Trench 5**      Length: 1m      Width: 1m      Depth: 0.80m

Context	Description	Interpretation	Depth (below ground level)
501	Mid reddish brown soft clay	Made-ground layer	0-0.05m
502	Mid greyish brown soft clayey silt	Topsoil	0.05-0.15m
503	Mid greyish brown soft clayey silt with frequent tile fragments	Made-ground layer	0.15-0.25m
504	Mid greyish brown soft clayey silt	Made ground layer	0.25-0.45m
505	Mid greenish brown firm clayey silt	Subsoil	0.45-0.70m
506	Light reddish brown hard clay	Natural	0.70+m
507	Mixed natural clay and made ground soils	Fill of grave pit 509	0.25-0.80m
508	Skeleton, only rib cage partially exposed	Inhumation burial	0.80+m
509	Linear E-W pit, flat base, straight sides	Grave pit	0.25-0.80+m

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**Trench 6**      Length: 1m      Width: 1m      Depth: 1m

Context	Description	Interpretation	Depth (below ground level)
601	Mid reddish brown soft clay	Made-ground layer	0-0.15m
602	Mid greyish brown soft clayey silt	Topsoil	0.15-0.45m
603	Mid greenish brown firm clayey silt	Subsoil	0.45-1m
604	Light reddish brown hard clay	Natural	1+m

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**Trench 7**      Length: 1m      Width: 1m      Depth: 0.50m

Context	Description	Interpretation	Depth (below ground level)
701	Mid reddish brown soft clay	Made-ground layer	0-0.05m
702	Mid greyish brown soft clayey silt	Topsoil	0.05-0.10m
703	Mid greenish brown firm clayey silt	Subsoil	0.10-0.30m
704	Light reddish brown hard clay	Natural	0.30+m
705	Mid greenish brown hard clayey silt	Fill of 705	0.10-0.50m
706	Linear E-W pit straight sides, flat base	Corner of grave pit	0.10-0.50m

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**Artefactual evidence (by Derek Hurst)**

*Artefact recovery policy*

All artefacts from the area of salvage recording were retrieved by hand and retained in accordance with the service manual (CAS 1995).

*Method of analysis*

All hand-retrieved finds were examined and a primary record was made on a Microsoft Access 2000 database. Artefacts were identified, quantified and dated and a *terminus post quem* date produced for each stratified context.

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The pottery and ceramic building material was examined under x20 magnification and recorded by fabric type and form according to the fabric reference series maintained by the service (Hurst and Rees 1992; Hurst 1994).

#### *Artefactual analysis*

Where datable, finds of medieval date were most in evidence. Apart from the medieval pottery fragments of tile, field drain and iron objects were recovered. The group came from 8 stratified contexts and could be dated from the medieval period onwards (see Table 1). The level of preservation was generally fair with the majority of sherds displaying only moderate levels of abrasion.

Material	Total	Weight (g)
Medieval pottery	6	158
Ceramic building material (tiles)	28	1740
Ceramic building material (field drain)	3	3169
Iron objects	2	88
Animal bone	1	113
<b>Totals</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>5268</b>

Table 1: *Quantification of the assemblage*

#### *Discussion of the pottery*

All sherds have been grouped and quantified according to fabric type (see Table 2). The medieval pottery comprised the ordinary domestic forms of the medieval period, such as the tripod pitcher (used for serving drink; 401, 405) and cooking pot (401, 603). The pottery was quite typical of its type in this part of Worcestershire as it comprised Worcester-type and Malvernian wares (see Hurst and Rees 1992), which between them were the main producers of domestic ceramics in this period. The date of a sherd from context 405 was of particular interest as it corresponded with the general date ascribed to the north wall of the church on architectural grounds.

Despite the small area excavated there was a reasonable quantity of medieval pottery, and this quantity may be fairly unusual in a churchyard context, where typically there are few pottery sherds of this date. This may be easily explained by the exclusion of domestic material from a churchyard in the normal course of events. However, at St. James the Great church the quantity of medieval pottery does seem higher than normal. For instance, only four medieval sherds were recovered from 30m<sup>2</sup> of evaluation trenching at St Laurence's church in Alvechurch (Miller and Jones 2001), whereas at St. James the Great six sherds were recovered from an area of about 6m<sup>2</sup>.

Fabric number	Fabric name	Total sherds	Weight (g)
55	Worcester-type ware	3	64
56	Malvernian ware	1	15
81	German stoneware	1	8

Table 2: *Quantification of the medieval pottery by fabric*

#### *Other finds*

A summary of the finds and associated location or contexts by period is presented below (Table 3). Where possible, *terminus post quem* dates have been allocated and the importance of individual finds commented upon as necessary.

Context	Material	Fabric	Total	Weight (g)	Tpq	Overall context tpq
205	Ceramic building material (tiles)		18	747	13-18th c	13th-18th c
301	Ceramic building material (tiles)		5	771	13-18th c	13th-18th c
301	Pot	69	1	71	15th-16th c	17th-18th c
	Ceramic field drain		2	943	17th-18th c	
	Iron wall-hook		1	69	-	
303	Ceramic building material (tiles)		1	6	13th-18th c	13th-18th c
401	Pot	55	1	37	12th-E13th c	17th-18th c
	Pot	55	1	19	13th-14th c	
	Pot	81	1	8	15th-16th c	
	Ceramic field drain		1	2226	17th-18th c	
	Ceramic building material (tiles)		3	196	13th-18th c	
	Bone (animal)		1	113	-	
405	Pot	55	1	8	12th-E13th c	12th-E13th c
	Iron nail		1	19	-	
507	Ceramic building material (tiles)		1	20	13th-18th c	13th-18th c
603	Pot	56	1	15	13th-14th c	13th-14th c

Table 3: Quantification of artefacts by context with overall tpq indicated

Other than the pottery this small assemblage only included ceramic building materials, field drain, and iron objects. The ceramic building materials were typical flat roof tiles generally dating anywhere in a 13th to 18th century time span. It is, therefore, perfectly possible that they were of medieval date. They were in sandy fabrics which might well have emanated from the Worcester tile factories of this period (Hurst 1994). The amount of ceramic roof tile is relatively high compared to other categories of find, but may be more easily explained as being the result of miscellaneous repairs to the church roof.

#### Significance

The finds assemblage was typical for the medieval period for this part of Worcestershire, and so in that sense is not of any particular significance. Though the amount of medieval pottery did seem larger than might normally be expected from a medieval churchyard, no particular significance could be readily attached to this.

#### Site discussion

The evaluation carried out in the northern side of St. James the Great church in Norton Juxta Kempsey has revealed substantial evidence for inhumation burials. The human remains are found at approximately 0.50 to 0.70m below present ground level. Despite great bioturbation, the degree of preservation of the human remains is good. A considerable amount of medieval finds was retrieved from the grave backfills, thereby establishing a preliminary date for them. The project succeeded also in revealing the original Norman foundation of the present north wall of the nave of the church. The foundation is in excellent condition. Due to the information obtained from the evaluation it can be suggested that the site should be treated as archaeologically sensitive if the proposed development involves ground works more than 0.50-0.70m deep.



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## Site conclusions

The evaluation was able to demonstrate with confidence that substantial archaeological deposits are present on this site. Although there is no sign of activities or residual deposition of material from the nearby Romano-British sites, the small scale test pitting evaluation revealed three possible medieval graves, which appear to be associated with an early phase of the church. The original Norman foundation was also exposed in order to assess its depth and condition. The results of the evaluation indicate that the site is of significance and has considerable medieval remains (burials).

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## Publication summary

The Service has a professional obligation to publish the results of archaeological projects within a reasonable period of time. To this end, the Service intends to use this summary as the basis for publication through local or regional journals. The client is requested to consider the content of this section as being acceptable for such publication.

*An archaeological evaluation was undertaken on behalf of Stainburn Taylor Architects at the church of St. James the Great, Norton Juxta Kempsey, Worcestershire (NGR ref SO 8776 1185; SMR ref WSM 35957). The project comprised the excavation of trial trenches, which showed that the site has archaeological potential for the survival of well-preserved inhumation burials. Graves of possible medieval date were present in three trenches at approximately 0.50-0.70m below present ground level.*

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## Archive

Fieldwork progress records AS2	1
Digital photographs	37
Trench records AS41	7
Drawings	3
Boxes of finds	1

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Worcestershire County Museum  
Hartlebury Castle, Hartlebury  
Near Kidderminster  
Worcestershire DY11 7XZ  
01299 250416

telephone

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## Acknowledgements

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*Plate 1. Trench 2: grave pit 207, facing east*



*Plate 2. Trench 3: foundation 304 and east-west ditch 302, facing west*



*Plate 3. Trench 4: north facing elevation of nave wall and foundation 404, facing south*



*Plate 4. Trench 5: east facing section across trench showing skeleton 508*

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*Plate 5. Trench 6: north facing section across trench*



*Plate 6. Trench 7: west facing section across trench showing grave pit 706*

Period	Artefact type	Total	Weight (g)	Specialist report?	Important research assemblage?
Medieval	Pottery	6	158	Y	N
Medieval to post-medieval	Roof tile	28	1740	Y	N
Post-medieval	Field drain	3	3169	Y	N
Undated	Iron objects	2	88	N	N
Undated	Bone	1	113	N	N

*Table 4: Summary of the assemblage*

**\*Table 4 is a new table requested by the HER to enable them to input data more efficiently. The table can be imported directly from the Model finds database structure where it is also called 'summary of the assemblage', with the last two fields being filled in once the table has been imported.**

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